

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

George Holmes, # 289114,	) C/A No.: 9:11-918-SB-BHH
	)
vs.	Plaintiff, )
	) Report and Recommendation
Helen Rose Roper, Esq.,	)
	Defendants. )
	)

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Plaintiff, a state prisoner proceeding *pro se*, files this civil rights suit pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against his court-appointed counsel. Plaintiff alleges that his counsel “was found ineffective.....” and had a “conflict of interest.” Plaintiff also alleges that she took “advantage of [him] knowing that [he] didn’t fully understand the Court process.” Plaintiff claims he was sent to “Mental Health (MUSC)... for the competency to stand trial.” According to the Complaint, Plaintiff told his counsel that “Beaufort County Sheriff[‘s] Office (BCSO) didn’t have no kind of search warrants when they arrested [him] on 12-12-2008.” Plaintiff claims this is a Fourth Amendment violation. Plaintiff further claims “[he] was charge[d] with two charges that happen[ed] the same date, time and place, but on [his] Indictments (sic) sheets there is (sic) two different dates.” Plaintiff also challenges the fine which was imposed upon him, claiming it was excessive for a first offense. Plaintiff alleges his bond was also excessive, complains he was not given “time served,” and was not sent to “a drug rehab for some help.” Plaintiff is “suing for emotional distress and pain and suffering.”

Under established local procedure in this judicial district, a careful review has been made of the *pro se* complaint pursuant to the procedural provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915;

28 U.S.C. § 1915A; and the Prison Litigation Reform Act, Pub. L. No. 104-134, 110 Stat. 1321 (1996). This review has been conducted in light of the following precedents: *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 112 S.Ct. 1728 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 109 S.Ct. 1827 (1989); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 92 S.Ct. 594 (1972); *Nasim v. Warden, Maryland House of Correction*, 64 F.3d 951 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1995)(*en banc*); and *Todd v. Baskerville*, 712 F.2d 70 (4th Cir. 1983).

The complaint herein has been filed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915, which permits an indigent litigant to commence an action in federal court without prepaying the administrative costs of proceeding with the lawsuit. To protect against possible abuses of this privilege, the statute allows a district court to dismiss the case upon a finding that the action “fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted” or is “frivolous or malicious.” 28 U.S.C. §1915(e)(2)(B)(I), (ii). A finding of frivolity can be made where the complaint “lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact.” *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. at 31. Hence, under 28 U.S.C. §1915(e)(2)(B), a claim based on a meritless legal theory may be dismissed *sua sponte*. *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319 (1989).

This court is required to liberally construe *pro se* documents, *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 97 S. Ct. 285 (1976), holding them to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys, *Hughes v. Rowe*, 449 U.S. 5, 101 S. Ct. 173 (1980)(*per curiam*). Even under this less stringent standard, however, the *pro se* petition is subject to summary dismissal. The mandated liberal construction afforded *pro se* pleadings means that if the court can reasonably read the pleadings to state a valid claim on which the plaintiff could prevail, it should do so, but a district court may not rewrite a petition to “conjure up questions never squarely presented” to the court. *Beaudett v. City of Hampton*, 775 F.2d 1274, 1278 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir.

1985). The requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. *Weller v. Department of Social Services*, 901 F.2d 387 (4th Cir. 1990).

Plaintiff can not proceed against his court appointed attorney because the attorney has not acted under color of state law. In order to state a cause of action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege that: (1) the defendant(s) deprived him or her of a federal right, and (2) did so under color of state law. *Gomez v. Toledo*, 446 U.S. 635, 640 (1980). An attorney, whether retained, court-appointed, or a public defender, does not act under color of state law, which is a jurisdictional prerequisite for any civil action brought under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. See *Deas v. Potts*, 547 F.2d 800 (4th Cir. 1976)(private attorney); *Hall v. Quillen*, 631 F.2d 1154, 1155-1156 & nn. 2-3 (4th Cir. 1980)(court-appointed attorney); and *Polk County v. Dodson*, 454 U.S. 312, 317-324 & nn. 8-16 (1981)(public defender). See also *Lugar v. Edmondson Oil Co.*, 457 U.S. 922, 936 (1982)(As a matter of substantive constitutional law the state-action requirement reflects judicial recognition of the fact that "most rights secured by the Constitution are protected only against infringement by governments...") citing *Flagg Brothers*, 436 U.S. 149, 156, 98 S.Ct. 1729, 1733 (1978). Since Plaintiff has named a Defendant who has not acted under color of state law, the Defendant is entitled to summary dismissal.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Accordingly, it is recommended that the District Court dismiss the complaint in the above-captioned case *without prejudice* and without issuance and service of process. See *Denton v. Hernandez, supra*; *Neitzke v. Williams, supra*; *Haines v. Kerner, supra*; *Todd v.*

*Baskerville, supra*, 712 F.2d at 74; 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B); and 28 U.S.C. § 1915A [the court shall review, as soon as practicable after docketing, prisoner cases to determine whether they are subject to any grounds for dismissal].

s/Bruce Howe Hendricks  
United States Magistrate Judge

May 5, 2011  
Charleston, South Carolina

**The plaintiff's attention is directed to the important notice on the next page.**

**Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation**

The parties are advised that they may file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation with the District Judge. Objections must specifically identify the portions of the Report and Recommendation to which objections are made and the basis for such objections. “[I]n the absence of a timely filed objection, a district court need not conduct a de novo review, but instead must ‘only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation.’” *Diamond v. Colonial Life & Acc. Ins. Co.*, 416 F.3d 310 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2005) (quoting Fed. R. Civ. P. 72 advisory committee’s note).

Specific written objections must be filed within fourteen (14) days of the date of service of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b); see Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a), (d). Filing by mail pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5 may be accomplished by mailing objections to:

Larry W. Propes, Clerk  
United States District Court  
Post Office Box 835  
Charleston, South Carolina 29402

**Failure to timely file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation will result in waiver of the right to appeal from a judgment of the District Court based upon such Recommendation.** 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); *Wright v. Collins*, 766 F.2d 841 (4th Cir. 1985); *United States v. Schronce*, 727 F.2d 91 (4th Cir. 1984).